

# προσκυνέω Sermon Notes [Gulf Gate Church 09.02.12]

## Hello

- † **[Slide 1: Intro]** Good morning. My name is Will Groben. If you have been here a few months, you might remember that back in March Pastor Scott introduced me as the fellow creating the devotions for the letters of John series.
- I have taught at Gulf Gate Church about a dozen times, back when you met in the school across the street, but this is my first time teaching in this building.
  - My wife, LeeAnn, and I want to thank you for letting us come worship with you, today and the many times we have been here during the last few years even when I wasn't teaching. We have always sensed your hospitality and kindness.
- † **[Slide 2: GGC Sign]** Sometimes that hospitality has been quirky. How many of you were here in the summer of 2005 for the Sermon on the Mount series? That was a long time ago!
- That was the first Sunday service I ever preached. It was a big day for me! That Saturday, LeeAnn took my picture with my name on the sign, and I was all excited to get started.
  - I got all dressed up for the big occasion. I got here early and got through the mic check. Then I greeted everyone coming in the door. I prayed fervently behind the stage and joyfully went through musical worship, and then, filled with the Holy Spirit and a whole lot of adrenaline, I came up on stage to start talking... and y'all hooted me down and told me to take off my jacket.
  - That might have ruined me right there! I might have never gotten my sermon out or ever preached again! But instead, somehow, God used it to make me feel relaxed and welcomed, like I was accepted as one of you. Of course, I realize now that you just had no manners...

## Praise is good but insufficient as worship

- † **[Slide 3: ?]** I want to ask Josh to join me up here. Josh just led us in a nice time of musical praise, one of my favorite activities.
- What we will explore today is how deeply we each went into an attitude of worship. Did you express true biblical worship to your amazing creator and savior? or did you merely offer some kind words of praise? or something in between?
  - I am going to ask three people to help me illustrate four aspects of worship, and then I want to give you a little surprise from the Greek text of the New Testament.
- † **[Slide 4: Praise scriptures]** Josh, please read to us some verses about praise...
- *Psalm 33.1 NET: You godly ones, shout for joy because of the LORD! It is appropriate for the morally upright to offer him praise.*
  - *Psalm 66.1-2 NIV: Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.*
  - So this singing praise is a good thing to do. But our question today is whether this is sufficient worship for our amazing God. If we just sing the songs and that is it, is this enough or is God looking for more?
- † Let me illustrate with a human relationship. Josh and I are not very close friends yet. I hope we will be someday, but we have not talked to each other much lately. Suppose I come in today and shout praises at Josh: "I love you Josh! I think you are the greatest worship leader ever! I am loyal and

will worship only under you!” What would Josh think? Let’s ask him: Given the state of our relationship, what would you think if I came in today and sang all these praises to you? Would you think I was expressing a true devotion if I said those things but did nothing else to show devotion? Would you think I was actively pursuing an intimate friendship? No...

- † So what about when I come sing praises to God... What if really I get into it, with hands raised and a loud voice, maybe I even bounce a little, and I mean what I am singing while I sing it... but I come to church only sporadically and I sing only the songs I like, and this is the extent of my worship during the week, do you think this is sufficient for showing worship to God? Or does God expect a greater level of devotion? I think Josh would agree with me that God wants more.

### **Devotion is important but even with praise is insufficient as worship**

- † **[Slide 5: Devotion scriptures]** Let me next bring Ryan up here. Thanks for your help, Josh! Ryan, please read the scripture about the greatest commandment...

- *Matthew 22.37-38 NET: Jesus said ... “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”*
- If we are loving God with all of ourselves, with all of our capacity to love, we will show it by coming here to sing praises to him together, but we will be devoted to coming together to sing those praises, eager to be here, every week, on-time, excited to begin praising him together. We will be praising him before we even get in the door! And this is really good. Ryan, will you read the passage about devotion?
- *Acts 11.23 NET: When [Barnabas] came and saw the grace of God [among the Gentiles of Antioch], he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts...*
- Each of us must ask if we truly have a heart and lifestyle that is devoted to God. But even if we do, even if we are excited to be here each week and finding times to praise God all through the week, that would be wonderful, but still we have to ask whether this is sufficient as worship.

- † Again, let’s illustrate this with a human relationship. Ryan and I have talked recently, and we enjoyed a good time of mutual encouragement. We got to know each other originally because I invited him out to lunch six months ago, and since then I have bought him lunch several times. I don’t say that to suggest he start reciprocating, just to show I have been attentive to this relationship. I have tried to encourage Ryan in his sermon preparations and have expressed a desire to get to know him and his family better. So do you think Ryan would say that I have been authentically expressing devotion to him as a friend? Let’s see... Ryan, would you agree that I have shown you devotion as a friend? I thought you would, but if I combine this devotion with singing your praises as a wonderful pastor, the best assistant pastor ever, that if I were a lay leader I would serve only under you, would this amount to worship? No.

- † So would this be enough to say we have worshipped God? I mean, suppose we really are attentive to God, coming to church regularly, singing all the songs, finding time to praise him during the week, really meaning it when we say we love him and think he is awesome. And suppose during the week we try to live good lives, even serving others in God’s name, but we are trying to live right in our own strength of character or within our comfort zones instead of depending on God to help us. Is this true worship? It is worshipful, but it is still not sufficient as worship, because God calls on us also to be dependent on him.

### **Dependence is necessary but even with praise and devotion is still insufficient.**

- † **[Slide 6: Dependence scriptures]** Let me ask my wife, LeeAnn, to come up. Thanks, Ryan, for your help. LeeAnn, please read some scripture about depending on God...

- *Psalm 55.22 NASB: Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.*
- *Jeremiah 17.5, 7 NLT: This is what the LORD says: “Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the LORD... But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.”*
- *Ephesians 6.10-11 NIV: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*
- God wants us to walk with him each day, depending on him for wisdom, strength, and courage, depending on him to bring us success in ministry and life.

† Now let's consider my relationship with LeeAnn. LeeAnn, would you agree that I am an attentive husband, and that we enjoy relational intimacy and open communication? I do sing your praises: all the time we were in Dallas, I was sending out newsletters that told of what a wonderful wife you are to me. And anyone who knows us realizes that I depend on you in several ways, not the least of which is your steady income to pay for all the books I buy. I also am dependent on you for affection, encouragement, accountability, and so on. But still, even if I praise you, show you devotion, and depend on you, would you say that I worship you? Not enough, right? The question is whether praise, devotion, and dependence constitutes the fullness of worship. No, because despite my great respect for LeeAnn, I do not submit to her like a slave and obey her commands. Thanks, LeeAnn, for your help.

† Suppose we come to church and sing passionately and authentically our praises to God, and we do relate to him all week long, depending on him to save us, to transform us to be more like Christ, to empower us in our ministries and to sustain us through our trials, is this now enough to say we truly worship him? Or does there also need to be an element of submission and obedience?

### **Submission is necessary along with praise, devotion, and dependence.**

† **[Slide 7: Submission scriptures]** *James 4.6b-7a NLT: Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but favors the humble.” So humble yourselves before God.*

- *Luke 11.28 NET: Jesus said, “Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it!”*
- *John 14.15 NET: Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.”*
- That last one really should have an impact on our hearts. We might come in and sing expressions of our love and devotion, but to God, to Jesus, it is empty blathering if we are not trying to be obedient: Jesus said that if we loved him, then we would obey him. If you ever took a logic course, you know this implies that if you don't obey him, then you don't love him.
- If we combine the concepts of praise, devotion, dependence, and submission, we might summarize it this way: God, I need what you have to offer; and I offer all I have to you. God, I need what you have to offer; and I offer all I have to you.

### **προσκυνέω**

† **[Slide 8: worship scriptures]** Now I have heard sermons like this before, usually about how worship includes serving, not just singing. Those are not bad sermons, in fact sometimes the word “worship” in our English Bibles translates the Greek word λατρεύω, which means “I serve.”

- But I have to admit that I sometimes have felt skeptical of the logic when I heard these sermons. And maybe that is how you feel right now. I wanted to use a creative, relational, illustration to lead you to the conclusion that true worship is more than just words of praise, it involves heart-felt and consistent devotion, dependence, and submission. But maybe you are not confident in

my logic, so I am going to show you something surprising from the Greek text of the New Testament.

- For those of you who are wondering why I would care about the Greek text, the New Testament was originally written in Greek. The Bibles we use today are English translations from the Greek text, and sometimes it benefits us to look at the text in its original language.
- † *Luke 4.8 NIV: Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”*
  - *John 4.23 NLT: [Jesus talking] “But the time is coming-- indeed it's here now-- when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.”*
  - The word “worship” in these passages translates the Greek verb προσκυνέω. This is a common verb, used sixty times in the New Testament. I did thorough research, consulting eleven Greek dictionaries and looking up all sixty of those New Testament occurrences, and I think you are going to be surprised at what προσκυνέω means.
  - **[Slide 9: προσκυνέω graphic]** When we see the word “worship,” we think of offering praise, like we do each Sunday; and maybe we think of having true devotion in our hearts. Indeed, there is another Greek word sometimes translated as “worship,” σέβω, which occurs ten times in the New Testament and means to express devotion and allegiance.
  - But προσκυνέω means more than that. προσκυνέω means to prostrate yourself in an attitude of acknowledged dependence and submissive obedience. Let me say it again: προσκυνέω means to prostrate yourself in an attitude of acknowledged dependence and submissive obedience. We bow down and we admit our need for God or Jesus and we submit to him. That’s the meaning of the word most often translated as “worship” in the New Testament.
- † **[Slide 10: Matthew 2.11]** Sometimes this attitude and action of prostrating ourselves before God is very clear even in English, because of the way the Greek New Testament was written.
  - *Matthew 2.11a NET: As they [the three wise men] came into the house and saw the child with Mary his mother, they bowed down and worshiped him.*
  - Here, the verb “worship” translates προσκυνέω, but there is another verb added for “bowed down.” The Greek literally says, “throwing themselves down, they worshipped him.”
- † **[Slide 11: Matthew 8.2]** Sometimes, our English Bibles even translate προσκυνέω as bowing down.
  - *Matthew 8.2 NASB: And a leper came to Him [Jesus] and bowed down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”*
  - The verb “bowed down” here is προσκυνέω.
- † When the Jews translated the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament into Greek, they used προσκυνέω 185 times to translate verbs such as הִשָּׁתַחֲוּ or הִרְחוּ, which mean to prostrate or bow down.
- † **[Slide 12: Black Obelisk]** Why all this prostrating and bowing down? In the ancient near east, this was how they showed submission, dependence, and devotion.
  - This slide shows the Black Obelisk of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III. It is a monument he erected to depict his victories over neighboring nations. When he depicted Israel’s king Jehu paying him tribute, he did it by showing Jehu bowing prostrate before him, because that is how they showed submission, dependence, and devotion.

- When Jesus was ministering in Israel, this was a common way to show Jesus worship: to bow before him and acknowledge your need and submission, like the leper in Matthew 8 did. In Matthew 9, we see a religious leader do it.
  - **[Slide 13: Matthew 9.18]** *Matthew 9.18 NIV: While he [Jesus] was saying this, a synagogue leader came and kneelt before him and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.”*
  - “kneelt” translates προσκυνέω. The leper and the desperate father were willing to put themselves under Jesus’ control, to beg him for help and do whatever he commanded them to do. They showed this by prostrating themselves before him.
- † **[Slide 14: προσκυνέω graphic]** In later church ages, it became common to kneel when people prayed, to show God their submission and dependence and devotion. Today we might bow our heads or stand on our tip toes and raise our hands high, but the important question is, what is in our hearts? Are we really offering what prostration symbolized back in Jesus’ day, what προσκυνέω implied, which is submission, dependence, and devotion? or are we offering only some easy words of praise?

### Application in Communion

- † We are coming to a time of communion. The Bible says it is important to get your head and heart right with God before you observe this ordinance. So please, when we pray in a moment, be honest with yourself and God about any shortcomings in your attitude of worship. Right now, the ushers will distribute some guidance questions you can use during prayer, if you want.
- † Communion is when we remember what Christ has done for us on the cross. In taking of the bread and juice, we admit our need for the sacrifice of Christ’s body and blood. And as believers in that need for God’s grace, we offer our full devotion and submission to obey.
- [This paragraph was not in the sermon as I presented it, but should have been.] As we remember what Christ has done for us, we also rejoice in the grace of God. Because of Christ’s sacrifice, God forgives our failure to show him proper worship. He welcomes us to approach him even in our flawed state, to confess our sorrow at our failures and to receive his forgiveness and cleansing. God will empower us to become better worshippers if we repentantly turn to him and trust in him.
- † **[Slide 15: blank]** We now are going to have our time of prayer. Feel free to come join me at the altar or out in the aisles to prostrate yourself or kneel to demonstrate to God your true worship of praise, devotion, dependence, and submission. Or you can kneel at your seats or just bow your heads. Whatever posture you adopt, please take a moment now to get your heart and mind fully right with God before we take communion together. Let’s have prayerful silence for the next five minutes...